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REMARKS

The Applicant thanks the Examiner for indicating that claims 7, 9-15 and 18 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim(s). In accordance with this indication, claim 1 is appropriately revised to include the subject matter of dependent claims 5 and 7, and claim 9 has been revised into an independent claim and incorporates the subject matter of previous claim 1. Therefore, these amended claims are now believed to be allowable.

As the remaining claims, except new claim 21, depend, either directly or indirectly, from these new independent claims, those dependent claims are believed to be allowable as well.

With claim 20 now canceled in view of the restriction requirement, new independent claim 21 was added and contains the limitations of previous claim 1 and the specific limitation from claim 9 of "a rotary transfer lock disposed between an outlet for the heated sludge in the first stage and the inlet for the heated sludge in the second stage". As this new claim incorporates only the specific subject matter from previous claim 9, which is not disclosed, taught or suggested by the cited references, either alone or in combination, the Applicant believes this claim to be allowable as well. In other words, the features of claim 9 which do not have an impact on the novelty of that subject matter of the rotary transfer lock have been eliminated for the sake of clarity.

As a final matter, claims 6 and 18 are amended to be dependent on Claim 1. Claims 2-6, 16, 17 and 19 are either directly or indirectly dependent on claim 1 and are now believed to be allowable.

If any further amendment to this application is believed necessary to advance prosecution and place this case in allowable form, the Examiner is courteously solicited to contact the undersigned representative of the Applicant to discuss the same.

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In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the raised rejection(s) should be withdrawn and this application is now placed in a condition for allowance. Action to that end, in the form of an early Notice of Allowance, is courteously solicited by the Applicant at this time.

The Applicant respectfully requests that any outstanding objection(s) or requirement(s), as to the form of this application, be held in abeyance until allowable subject matter is indicated for this case.

In the event that there are any fee deficiencies or additional fees are payable, please charge the same or credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account (Account No. 04-0213).

Respectfully submitted,



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